

REMARKS

No new matter is added by this amendment. The present Amendment is being filed with a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114. The present application was filed on September 12, 2003 with original claims 1-140. By this amendment, claims 39 and 108 have been amended. The claims remaining in consideration are claims 39-40, 43-47, 49-54, 108-109, 112, 114-116, 118-123, 141 and 148 of which claims 39 and 108 are independent. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The Examiner objected to claim 41. The deficiency has been corrected.

Claims 39-40, 43-47, 50-53, 108-109, 112, 114-116, 119-122 and 141-148 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,511,377 issued to Weiss (Weiss) in view of U.S. Patent 6,227,972 issued to Walker (Walker).

Independent claims 39 and 108 have been amended to more clearly identify the subject matter applicants regard as the invention.

Amended independent claim 39 sets forth a method for crediting a player of a gaming machine with bonus points. The method includes the step of establishing a player account for the player. The player account is stored in the computer coupled to the gaming machine and has an associated player account number. The method further includes the step of providing a database for storing electronic vouchers in a list separate from the player count, assigning the first number of bonus points to a first electronic voucher. Each electronic voucher has a first parameter and is a separate electronic record stored in the list in the database. The method defines the first parameter of the first electronic voucher as being an expiration date of the first electronic voucher. The method further includes the steps of assigning the first electronic voucher to the player account by storing the player account number associated with the player's player account in the first electronic voucher, allowing the player to convert at least a portion of the first number of bonus points as credits, downloading the converted credits to the gaming machine, and allowing the player to play the gaming machine using the downloaded credits. The method further includes the steps of creating a second electronic voucher containing any downloaded credits not wagered by the player, after the player stops playing the game, and assigning the second electronic voucher

to the player account by storing a player account associated with the player's player account in the second voucher, the first parameter of the second electronic voucher is set as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher.

In independent claim 39: (1) the vouchers are electronic records, (2) the vouchers are stored in the list *which is separate from the player accounts*, and (3) the vouchers are assigned to the player account by the storing of the player account number of the voucher, i.e., electronic record. According to the MPEP, “[a] claim is anticipated only if each and every element is set forth in the claim as filed, either expressly or inherently described, in the single prior art reference.” MPEP §2131. As detailed below Weiss does not include each and every limitation of amended claim 39.

Weiss teaches a cashless gaming system which stores an established player accounts in a player database 62. Each player account may have stored therein: cash chip balance, marker balance, player point balance, and promotional balance. However these values are stored directly in the player account. For example the specification clearly states that the “cashless gaming system 10 includes means for awarding bonus points directly to the player's electronic column...”, column 12, lines 60-63. Weiss does not include a list of vouchers, i.e., a list containing electronic records, which are separate from the player accounts. Additionally Weiss does not assign an electronic record, i.e., voucher, to a player account by storing the player account number of a player account within the record, as required by independent claims 39 and 108. Thus as claimed and shown in Figures 3 and 4, the present invention is embodied in amended claim 39 includes a player account and a list of electronic vouchers or records, where each voucher includes a number of associated bonus points and each voucher is associated with the player account by storing an associated player account number therein.

In amended claim 39, once the player is done playing, a second electronic voucher containing the any downloaded credits which have not been wagered by the player is created on the host computer and stored on the host computer in the player's account by storing the play account number associated with the player's player account in the second electronic voucher. The first parameter of the second electronic voucher is set as the expiration date

associated with the first electronic voucher. In this manner, the first parameter, i.e., the expiration date of the bonus points/credits is preserved.

Weiss makes no such teaching or suggestion of the electronic vouchers as claimed (as discussed above) nor the ability to preserve the expiration date of the bonus points/credits. Specifically, Weiss does not teach that electronic vouchers are stored separate from the player account as required by independent claim 39. By keeping the electronic vouchers in a separate database or table, this allows information regarding the outstanding vouchers to be indexed or searched much more quickly than if they were stored within the player accounts. Additionally, changes may be to a large number or bulk of vouchers much more quickly if they are in the same table. Otherwise at least one additional step needs to be performed to identify all of the relevant vouchers.

In Weiss, a cashless gaming system **10** is disclosed. The cashless gaming system **10** allows a player to open an electronic account (see column 8, lines 32-43). Promotional values can be posted to the player accounts (see, e.g., column 12, lines 18-30). The Examiner states that Weiss includes the step of providing a database which stores electronic vouchers in a list separated from the player account. Applicant, however, respectively disagrees with the Examiner.

Specifically, the Examiner references several cites several passages in Weiss, including column 9, lines 20-54 and states “data regarding voucher information for the player is stored electronically in a group account as part of a combined list of voucher data, which is separate from data stored the player account [sic] that lists the player information”. *Thus, as far as applicants can discern, the Examiner is equating the group account of Weiss with the list of all vouchers of the present invention.*

This is an incorrect reading of Weiss. In Weiss there are two different types of accounts: player accounts and groups accounts. The player accounts are individual accounts which include player identification information and promotional information. According to the specification, a “group account allows the casino to group multiple permanent and temporary player cards together as a group.” (Column 9, lines 20-22). Thus, the group account includes a plurality of individual accounts (see column 9, starting at line 30, which

identifies the player information in a group account). Promotional dollars may be added to the group account, but the promotional dollars are added to each individual player account in the group account (see, e.g., column 9, lines 22-26). Thus, applicants respectfully assert that, contrary to the Examiner's assertion the promotional information in Weiss is not separate from the player information.

Therefore, for the purposes of comparing Weiss with the present invention, applicants respectfully assert that the group account of Weiss is the same as a player account and that Weiss does not teach or suggest a list of electronic vouchers, separate from the player accounts, as required by amended independent claim 39.

As stated above, by keeping the electronic vouchers in a separate database or table, this allows information regarding the outstanding vouchers to be indexed or searched much more quickly than if they were stored within the player accounts. For example, in order to determine the total number of outstanding bones points or credits across all players, in Weiss, the system must first search across all player accounts and all group accounts to find all awarded and all unexpired and all non-used bonus points. In the present invention, the total number of outstanding bonus points or credits across all players, is simply the total (unredeemed or used) points or credits in the list of vouchers.

In Weiss, promotional dollars may be added to the player accounts and to group accounts. Thus, whether a single player account, or a group of player accounts grouped in a single group account, Weiss does not teach a separate list of electronic vouchers, separate from the player account, as required by independent claim 39.

The Examiner utilized Walker to show the use of a second voucher. However, Walker does not overcome the deficiencies of Weiss.

Since neither Weiss nor Walker include each and every limitation of independent claim 39, applicants respectfully assert that the §103(a) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 40, 43-47, 50-53, and 141-144 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 39. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 40, 43-47, 49-53, and 141-144 are also allowable.

Independent claim 108 is an apparatus/system claim which mirrors independent method claim 39. Therefore, for the reasons set forth above, applicants respectfully assert that Weiss does not include each and every limitation of independent system claim 108. Therefore applicants assert that the §103(a) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 109, 112, 114-116, 119-122, and 145-148 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 108. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 109, 112, 114-116, 119-122 and 145-148 are also allowable.

Claims 54 and 123 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Weiss in view of Walker and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,503,146 issued to Walker et al. (Walker et al). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 54 and 123 are dependent upon allowable claims 39 and 108 respectfully. Therefore, based on the arguments above and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that claims 54 and 123 are also allowable.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Application, as amended, is now presented in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited.

Applicant believes that no fees are due, however, if any become required, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account 08-2789. Further and favorable reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted

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Date

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